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UNCLAS HARARE 001949

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT WSSD; HARARE

¶1. The World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in South Africa has become the subject matter for editorials in two mainstream newspapers - the government-controlled daily "The Herald" and the independent weekly "The Sunday Mirror." Editorial excerpts follow:

¶2. Under headline "Land vital for sustainable development" the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (08/26) comments:

"The WSSD which begins in South Africa today presents yet another platform for Zimbabwe to set the record straight on the land issue. . . For Zimbabwe the land is at the core of its development. But the country's just struggle for land has been viciously attacked by some powerful Western nations, notably Britain and the United States, who want the land-redistributing program stopped. As the program is now being wound up the American Government wants the government removed for correcting a historical injustice. In South Africa this week the demonization of the government will be intensified with the West seeking the isolation of Zimbabwe. But Zimbabwe's sovereignty will be strenuously defended, as it will be represented at the highest level. . . To us sustainable development is impossible to achieve for as long as land ownership is skewed in favor of a minority race. . . Zimbabwe will, therefore, today join the rest of the world in searching for ways to push forward an agenda to foster sustainable development. . ."

¶3. Under headline "Earth Summit not Blair Summit" the pro-government weekly "The Sunday Mirror" (08/25) comments:

"The debate in the British government on whether Tony Blair should boycott President Robert Mugabe's speech at the Johannesburg WSSD is an attempt by the Blair government to hijack a United Nations function and pursue the long drawn and well known British vendetta against Zimbabwe. The Earth Summit. . . is supposed to focus on food production, and it is unfortunate that Britain is trying to politicize the summit. It is therefore sad to note that, at a time when all UN agencies that deal with food security are agreed that the way forward is to encourage rural communities to be self sufficient in food, Tony Blair and his government are mourning that Mugabe is 'driving efficient farmers off highly productive land.' Whether Blair likes it or not, Zimbabwe has taken the first step towards rural development by giving the peasants land so that they can produce enough food to feed themselves. In any case, the WSSD has no politics on its agenda and as the British would like to intimate. . ."

SULLIVAN